

Deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month for the following month's newsletter. Send to: shea.flynn@gsmcls.org



Pastor Dave Bass



Saint Michael Lutheran
CHURCH • DAY SCHOOL • FOUNDATION

Weekend Regular Worship

Sat: 5:30 pm Informal
Sun: 8:00 am Traditional
10:45 am Blended

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Fort Myers, FL 33901
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www.smlcs.org

that the Lord will use these initial interactions and the ones that follow to strengthen and increase His kingdom here at St. Michael. Katy and I look forward to sharing a meal with all of you as we cohost with each of the elders who faithfully serve our congregation. May the Lord bless your meals and your conversations!

Pastor Dave

The Messenger

From the Pastor

Rev. Dave Bass

Meals have connected people ever since time began. In the Old Testament book of Exodus, the twenty-fourth chapter, we read that “Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel... they saw God, and they ate and drank.” When the God of the universe invites you to a meal, you attend. As Jesus sits down with His disciples before His crucifixion and death, He institutes Holy Communion as the meal that not only offers forgiveness, life and salvation but continually invites us as believers to gather together for mutual fellowship.

With this understanding, the *Find Your Five* initiative is intended for you, the congregational members of St. Michael, to get to know one another better. Some of you have been members here for decades, and some of you have been members for days. Yet, God has called us together in faith and fellowship. The idea is simple: find someone at church whom you may not know very well and invite them to a meal! It could be breakfast, lunch or dinner. It could be morning tea or afternoon coffee (whatever works for your schedules). To help foster this sense of community, your elder will be reaching out to you this month to invite you to an “elder flock” meal hosted by your elder, Katy and myself. These meals will be taking place throughout the year. Please be patient if you don’t hear from your elder right away. As you begin to make connections with others in church, let us know! In the narthex are jars filled with beads. The color of each bead is representative of how many meals you’ve asked someone to share with you. If you’ve invited one person or family to a meal, drop a red bead in the jar. The same goes for the remaining four meals. As you meet your second person or family, drop an orange bead in the jar. With the third meal and interaction with someone new, drop a bright orange bead. Your fourth interaction will have you dropping a yellow bead in the jar and your fifth meal and new friend connection a white marble. You can see by this display in the narthex, many connections have already taken place! So, if you haven’t yet joined the fun, it’s not too late to begin! We will be finding our five all throughout 2025! The joy in this journey is that you don’t have to limit your connection to only five people or five families. I trust



From the Principal

Kati Miser



This will be my last church newsletter with the title of principal at St. Michael Lutheran School. Mrs. Shelly McGovern has taken on the role of principal for the interim, and I am now an educational consultant to support her transition and eventually the transition to a newly called principal at SMLS. This peaceful transition is bittersweet for me and my family. We have the peace that comes from taking the steps necessary for my health, but there is also a sadness as a very important and special chapter in our lives has come to a close. While my role at St. Michael



has changed, my love for this ministry and the families we serve has not. I also know that this is not goodbye. I continue to use my decade of principal experience to work behind the scenes to provide support to the administration. I look forward to seeing who God will call to lead the school into its next ten years.

We ask for your fervent prayers as we begin the call process. Please pray blessings over Shelly McGovern and Jennifer Pohlman. Please pray for our call committee, that they will follow the Lord's guidance. Please pray that God removes any stumbling blocks that could delay or discourage this process. Finally, please pray that God would place it on our future principal's heart to know when God is calling them to SMLS.



We have all used the phrase, "Actions speak louder than words." The month of February is a good time to focus on putting our love and faith into action: turning those words into verbs, not just a statement of what we believe. **Our mission at SMLS is to educate children and touch families' lives with the awesome love of Jesus Christ!** Both "educate" and "touch" are verbs. We see both verbs in action through the examples of our students and staff making an eternal difference in the lives of others because of their faith in God who first loved us. Who might need you to walk beside them in a demonstration of God's love?

Enrollment for the 2025-26 school year is well underway! Give us a call if you want to invite a friend, neighbor or family member to experience St. Michael Lutheran School on a personal tour.



St. Michael Youth Ministries

St. Michael Youth Ministries

Sunday School: Middle and High School

In February, our middle and high school students will be having a heart-to-heart discussion on how with God "I am Loved."

Wednesday Youth Nights

On Wednesday nights, we will be enjoying dinner, games and small group devotions from 6:00-8:00pm. If you want to volunteer or would like to sponsor a meal (by cooking, catering or making a financial contribution), please contact Lori Schwan (lori.schwan@gsmlcs.org).



LCMS Youth Gathering

Plan to attend our February 12 LCMS youth night so we can begin to form small groups for the gathering. We are still accepting applications for our trip to New Orleans July 18-24. If you need more information, contact Lori Schwan.

Compassion International Scholarship

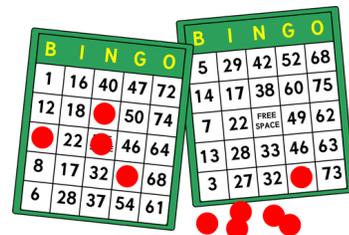
Thank you for supporting our regular \$43 monthly scholarship.

Youth Confirmation Modules

In January, 11 students learned a lot from Betsy Courtney about Baptism. Students who participated must turn in their Baptism project by February 2. The next confirmation module will be on the topic of "The Lord's Prayer" and will be taught by Chloe Brock on Sunday, February 2 from 12:15-4:00pm. Any middle school student is welcome. All module dates are listed on the yearly youth calendar.

Youth Fundraiser: Bingo Dinner

Plan to join us on Saturday, February 1. Doors to the gym will open at 6:00pm. Bingo starts at 7:00pm. So, there is plenty of time to make it to the gym after 5:30pm worship ends. Let the youth serve you all-you-can-eat salad, bread and spaghetti with marinara or meat sauce. You'll be able to bid on some amazing and unique desserts. Enjoy a night of bingo for all ages! Dinner tickets can be purchased at weekend worship services or from one of our St. Michael youth. The cost is \$15 for adults and kids 11 and older, \$10 for kids aged three to ten. Admission for kids two and younger is free. Bingo cards cost \$5 each and \$20 for five cards. Each round of bingo will have great prizes for winners. If you aren't able to attend, you can purchase raffle tickets for a chance to win either an Xbox Series X, a spa day or a 50/50 raffle. You don't have to be present to win.



Middle School Summer Servant Event

Students who will be going into sixth through ninth grades next school year are welcome to join other youth from around the FL-GA District for a week of camp fun and service around Gainesville. If more than 11 youth attend, we will need an additional adult chaperone. We plan to leave St. Michael in the late morning on Sunday, June 22 and will start our trip back home on Friday, June 27 around 1:00pm (which means we'll be back to St. Michael in the early evening). Camp registration costs \$508 if you register by February 5. The cost will increase to \$538 after that date. Transportation costs will be shared with you as we get closer to the trip. If you are interested in going, please fill out this Google Form: tinyurl.com/Luther25. Once you are sure you're going, please send in a check for \$175 as a non-refundable deposit to hold your spot. Payments and points can be used to help pay for this trip. Scholarships are also available.

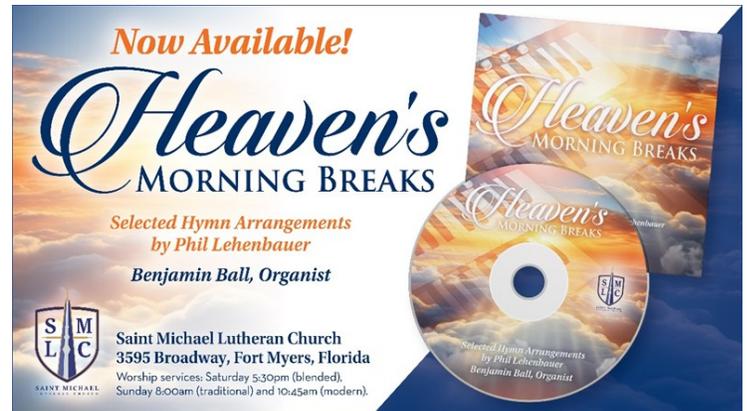
Wall o' Money

Our congregation is so generous in its support of all the youth activities we do! From February 22 to March 16, we will be having our Wall o' Money fundraiser in the narthex of our church. We will have envelopes with different dollar amounts listed on them. If you would like to donate toward this special fundraiser, select an envelope, and place the designated dollar amount in cash or check in the envelope and return it to the church. If you would like to contribute electronically, please contact Lori Schwan.

From the Director of Worship & Music

Ben Ball

Thank you to everyone who came out to the **organ dedication concert** on January 26! Although the instrument was installed in July, we wanted to wait until peak season so everyone could be here to celebrate together. The instrument has so many wonderful sound capabilities from a soft whisper to a thunderous roar and everything in between. In addition to the concert that afternoon, my new CD recording is now available (also available on a thumb drive if you do not have a CD player). This is a free gift to you! *Heaven's Morning Breaks* is a collection of 18 hymn arrangements written by organist-composer Phil Lehenbauer. Phil spent his full-time career as a band director after graduating from Ohio State University but always held a church organist position in addition to his teaching. He currently serves as the organist at Shepherd of the Coast Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Fort Lauderdale. In his retirement from teaching, he had time to begin publishing many of his works, and I am so thankful that he did as they have become a delightful staple of my organ library! Please email me (ben.ball@gsmllcs.org) if you would like to have a copy sent to you.



Blessings,
Ben Ball

From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan

Thrivent Financial Members

If you own a Thrivent Financial Product, you can give \$250 two times without giving away any of your own money. Contact Lori Schwan to see how you can partner with a fundraiser, a service project or an educational Thrivent Action Team. Those who have Choice Dollars can also direct them for 2024 projects until March 31, 2025.

Thursday Women's Bible Study

Join us on Thursdays from 9:30 to 11:00am on Zoom and on campus in the ELC boardroom for a women's Bible study led by Lori Schwan.

GriefShare

St. Michael's GriefShare group is meeting Saturdays beginning on February 8 from 9:00 to 11:00am in Pastor Dave's conference room. Feel free to join any session. Go to www.griefshare.org to register or sign up for daily email devotions. Reach out to Gail Schultz at (732) 991-0642 with any questions.

DivorceCare

DivorceCare is meeting on Tuesdays from 11:00am to 1:00pm through April 1. Anyone who is separated or divorced can join any session. The group meets virtually and in-person in the early learning center boardroom. Please register at www.divorcecare.org. Daily email devotions are also available from the same website. If you have any questions, please call Lori Schwan at (239) 939-1218, ext. 237.



From the Board of Local Outreach

Happy New Year! As we grow and evolve at St. Michael, the board of local outreach has absorbed some responsibilities from the board of congregational care. Your board of local outreach is kicking the year off with a **diaper drive** in February. This will be extremely helpful to new mothers as they care for their little ones. We also want to be more hands-on in our community, and we will be putting together small teams to help out some local organizations once a month. We will have sign-up sheets available at a later time. Keep your eyes on our printed and projected announcements for more information.

From the Director of Children & Family Ministries

Katy Bass

Worship Packs for Kids

Don't forget to pick up a worship bag for your child as they enter the church. Each bag contains activities related to the sermon and children's message, stickers, a craft and a snack. The plastic bags are yours to keep, but we ask that you return the pencil pouch to the designated basket.

Thank You

Thank you to everyone who donated snacks and plastic bags for our children's worship bags. It is very much appreciated!

Service Project Donations

On Sunday, February 9, our Sunday school kids will be working on a service project during the Sunday school hour. We will be preparing special Valentine's Day meals for a few of our St. Michael families. If you know of a family who would appreciate a special meal or if you would like to donate money or Publix gift cards to help defray costs, please contact Katy Bass.

Baptism Class

If you want to learn more about Baptism or if you are interested in scheduling a Baptism here at St. Michael, please plan to attend our Baptism class on Sunday, February 16. We will meet during the Sunday school hour (9:30-10:30am) in the dance room. If you have any questions, please contact Katy Bass.

Church Cookbook Update

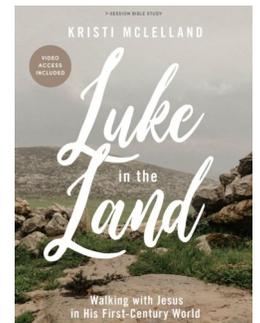
Thank you to everyone who submitted recipes for our upcoming church cookbook. Be on the lookout for information on how to order your very own copy!

Women's Bible Study: *Luke in the Land*

We will begin another evening women's Bible study in March for the season of Lent. We will be discussing the book *Luke in the Land* by Kristi McLelland. Be on the lookout for details including time and location in the coming weeks. If you are wondering what this Bible study is about, here is a quick overview:

In our Bibles, we have four Gospels describing Jesus's time on earth: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The land of Israel, the place Jesus walked and taught during His earthly ministry, is often referred to as the "fifth Gospel."

Follow Kristi McLelland through Israel as we study snapshots from the Gospel of Luke to see where the stories of the Bible took place. Over seven sessions, challenge the way you read the accounts of Jesus through teaching videos that take you to locations in Israel like Bethlehem, the Sea of Galilee, Gethsemane, Jerusalem and the road to Emmaus. Along the way, you'll see how Jesus, the Messiah, brought his kingdom to earth for everybody.



From the Director of Little Saints

Nikki Howley

Little Saints' annual **Winter Day** was held on January 31. Our one- and two-year-olds enjoyed snowball fights, ice skating, snow shovel relays and playing in the snow and ice followed by a warm, sweet treat of hot chocolate!

Little Saints will be hosting our annual **father-daughter dance** again this year on February 8 from 5:00-7:00pm. This year's theme is *Once Upon a Time*. Our gym will be transformed into something out of a fairy tale book! We look forward to all who attend having a great time and making special memories.

In February, the two-year-old rooms will be talking about **community helpers**. We hope to be able to bring in special speakers from the community to talk to the kids about their "community helper" jobs. If you know anyone who has a community-based job like a police officer, firefighter, veterinarian, doctor, nurse or garbage collector and who would like to come and speak to the kids, please let us know.

